

Hearing words from God. By Roz Addington.

31 October 2020

1 Samuel:1 – 21

For me, this is an interesting story and there are things in it that can teach us about hearing from God. It is also a story that is a little bit special to me as it was from this passage, that I first heard the Lord speaking to me back in the 1980's.

I knew that God did speak, but not to anyone as insignificant as me. I thought I wasn't good or grand enough for God to speak to. I was going through a particularly difficult time in my life and everything had gone horribly wrong. I was accused of doing something which I didn't do, I lost my job and was stuck in a village in Oxfordshire, on my own with a huge mortgage and I just didn't know which way to turn.

At that time, I was a member of Burford Methodist Church. I can remember that one Sunday, a preacher came and preached on the call of Samuel. I can't remember a word of what that preacher said, but he chose the hymn, Master speak, thy servant heareth. Verse 2 says this: '**Speak to me by name O master, let me know it is to me**'. I distinctly remember praying, and saying to God, "Yes speak to me Lord, I don't expect you to call me by name, but just tell me what you want me to do".

I don't know that I thought very much more about it. Then several months later, I was staying with a very good friend. I woke up very early one morning and I was lying contemplating things. When I heard a voice speaking to me. I turned over in bed and there was no-one there. I then heard the words, "I am building a people of Power. Build your church Roz." Then a pause and slightly more distantly, "wait for the power". To say I was stunned is to put it mildly. There was no doubt that it was God speaking to me. God does speak to people like me! It was a start of a new journey.

From there, I eventually went to Cliff College which was where I learned much about the importance of prayer and God speaking to his people. That is the only time I have heard God speak to me in an audible voice, but I have since learned how to hear God speaking in other ways. It is not a common thing to hear God speak audibly, and I feel hugely privileged to have had the experience.

Coming back to Samuel, it tells us in the passage that Samuel did not yet know the voice of the Lord. It was something he had to learn. Eli had to teach him. In a sense it is something we all need to learn. Not least because God speaks in multifarious ways. He speaks to us through his word, the Bible, through songs and hymns, through dreams, natural revelation, nature, everyday occurrences, our jobs, through other people, the arts, visions and pictures, words of knowledge, just about anything. The list goes on. We can consider a few of these.

Dreams

There are many examples in the Bible of God speaking in dreams. Perhaps the two most obvious which spring to mind are Joseph and Daniel. Joseph also had the gift of interpreting dreams. In my experience the interpretation of dreams can be problematic. There have been occasions when I have had dreams which when I've woken up. I've just known they were from God. Don't ask me how I know, I just do. God just somehow makes it clear. Trying to work out what they mean is a different matter and sometimes I've only been able to see it when something occurs and I've

thought, Oh, that was what that was about. I can also think of one occasion when I got the interpretation completely wrong and then suffered the consequences! Hindsight is a wonderful thing. None the less, God does speak to us in dreams. In the NT, in Acts 16 Paul had a dream of a man from Macedonia pleading with him to come and help them. That opened the door for Paul to take the Gospel message to Asia.

Visions and Pictures

For me this is the most common way in which God speaks to me. I am not asleep when this happens, I just see a picture in my mind's eye. Often in prayer meetings or in private devotions when I am seeking the will of God, but sometimes they come completely unbidden. It can be anywhere! Walking down the street, sitting reading, lying in bed – just about anywhere. Mostly these speak for themselves and again for the most part you just know they are from God. Sometimes these are quite simple and other times much more complex. Occasionally, I have had to struggle in prayer to work out what it is about. Anything I am unsure about, I either leave it on hold for a time or I seek someone who is able to test it for me. It is not wrong to ask God for confirmation of what he is saying.

Words of knowledge

Words of knowledge are words that come directly from God and for me they are words that I hear in my head. It is very difficult to explain exactly how that happens. I just start hearing words forming in my mind and as I start to write them down, so more follow. Other times I get a feeling inside that God wants to say something to his people and then I need to concentrate and consciously listen before the words start to come. Sometimes I have woken up with words on my mind and then I have to get up and write them down – and that can be in the middle of the night!

How do know they are from the Lord?

Sometimes that can be difficult. I have a fairly vivid imagination and sometimes I worry that I have got it wrong. Like Samuel, it is something I have had to learn. But I often find that God will use words which I would never think of using. Sometimes I have even had to go and look the word up to find out what it means. Then I know that it is from God and not from me. The other thing which I do, especially if I am not sure, is to bounce them off someone else and ask them to pray about them for me.

Although I have occasionally had words from God in the past, I have never had them in such proliferation as I've had recently. What is different to anything that I've had before is some of these messages have become prophetic in nature. So, this is a relatively new gift to me and if you really want to know, I'm terrified of getting it wrong. As I've said, it is not wrong to ask God for confirmation of what you have received. A prime example of that is Gideon and his fleeces. Judges 6:36-40. It is better to test it than to get it wrong.

Listening is a large part of hearing from God. We need to be listening constantly to what God might be saying to us. Not just when we are praying to him, but at absolutely any time. God has spoken to me in all kinds of places. On buses and trains, in the middle of the night, early in the morning, in the middle of a meal and even in the shower! We need to be open at all times. I have learnt to carry a notebook with me or to have something at hand so I am able to write down anything which I think God has given me. If you are unable to consider it at the time, it is then possible to come back to it later. I then don't have to rely on my memory which isn't great at the best of times!

What do we do with the messages?

Receiving words from the Lord comes with responsibility. When I receive a message from the Lord, very often I know instantly who it is for and who it is aimed at, especially if it is a personal message for someone else. It is then my responsibility to deliver it to that person or persons. This is fine when it is a nice encouraging message for someone. It is easy to deliver that. But if we look once again at Samuel, the message he had for Eli was far from being a pleasant one. It was one of judgement. In verse 15 it tells us that Samuel was afraid to tell Eli what the Lord had said. But Eli knew that if God has given you a message, then it is vital that the message is delivered. So, Eli encouraged Samuel to tell him even though, I suspect, that Eli knew what it was about.

When we receive a message, we have a responsibility to deliver that message, whether good or bad, otherwise the consequences of it lie with us. We become the guilty party. How the person accepts the message, is *not* our responsibility. That, you need to leave with God. We have discharged the message and it is up to that person to respond or not. It is not an easy thing to do sometimes. I have shared messages for the church with my current circuit which has fallen on deaf ears. People have tried to change it, re-interpret it, but their reaction is not my responsibility. I have done what God is asking and though I may pray for them, that will see and understand what God is saying, I have discharged what God has asked me to do. The burden I had for the situation has to a certain extent been lifted off me.

What is God saying to the church at this time?

Friday 26 April, 2019. Picture for the Methodist Church

As I was praying about the 'God in love unites us' document, I was thinking that the church was reaching a crossroads. As I thought this a picture from the Lord came to me. It was not exactly a crossroad, but there were 3 distinct pathways ahead.

There was a single pathway which split into 3. They were all going roughly in the same direction, but it was deviating from the central path. This central pathway was not the easiest way, but it looked pleasant. It was going uphill, there were a few boulders spread about, it was shaded by trees and looked lush, cool and beautiful.

The pathway to the left was much wider and was flat. It looked as though a tractor or some vehicle had been through it, rather like a farm track. This way was in bright sunshine, and the grass was yellowing as if it had been baked by the sun. It was an easy way to travel, but dry.

The pathway to the right was a dark, dank and foreboding path. It was very narrow, and the way was blocked by a tangle of thorny bushes and full of undergrowth. Not a path that would be at all good to go down. It was the only pathway in which I saw people and the people were trapped and unable to disentangle themselves.

What I felt God was saying to me was that the path in the middle is the way to go. The way of God – the narrow pathway talked about in Scripture. (Matthew 7:13&14). The one to the left is where those who are not following God's Word to the full were travelling –those following the way of the world. They are deviating from God's truths set out in the Bible. The pathway to the right is the one taken by those people who are hateful and hurtful to others.

The end of the pathways I could not really see. They were diverging more and more away from the central path, but the distance was shrouded in mist and haze. The church and people individually need to think very hard about the pathway they are on and choose carefully.

Wednesday 12 February 2020

As I was praying, I had the above picture again. At the division of the ways I saw a compass. The compass needle, instead of pointing straight ahead, was pointing to the left, towards the left pathway. I heard God say, "the needle needs to be re-adjusted". Romans 12:2. We need to be a moral compass to the world, pointing the way of God, not following the way of the world.

June 2020

I heard these words:

"Tell my people called by my name to stand firm, to move neither to the left or the right but to move onward in my strength and I will be their guide. I will lead them by the hand and show them the way I want them to go."

Sunday 16 August 2020

Bible Reference: Isaiah 43:14-21 This was followed by the following words:

"I will do a new thing. Watch and wait. Be vigilant, be alert, pray and see what I will do. I will set my church on a new path. I will guide and show you the way you should go. I will take you by the hand. I will lead you and be with you. You must stand firm, but you do not stand alone. You can't imagine what I am about to do. Everything will be as new. I will purge the land of all the dross, the things that are hindering my work. Then my Spirit will sweep through the land, cleansing and healing whatever it touches.

This was accompanied by a picture:

I saw a fire spreading through the country – not a furious raging fire, but gentle, though persistent. It was like controlled burning, so it was not out of control. A bit like how the heather is burnt to encourage the new shoots to grow. It was burning away the rubbish, leaving the ground fertile for the new shoots that are there, to grow. After the fire there was a fresh green spreading across the land as the new shoots began to grow and flourish.

Sunday 29 September 2020

I saw a picture of scrubland across a landscape, bushes, weeds and long straggly, coarse grass, thorns and briars. Underneath all this there were signs that green grass is beginning to grow. I felt God was saying that the scrub will be burnt away like a forest fire. Then the grass will be able to grow – lush and green. At the moment, it is hindered, unable to grow properly through the tangle of undergrowth, but the shoots are there. They are waiting for the right conditions. When those conditions are right, the grass will grow quickly and will spread across the land.